



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Department of Public Health

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TO: All Massachusetts Ambulance Services
FROM: Jon Burstein, MD, State EMS Medical Director
Louise Goyette, Director
DATE: February 10, 2005
RE: Ventricular Assist Devices

The purpose of this advisory is to alert you to patients with Ventricular Assist Devices (VAD)s, whom your EMS personnel may encounter in the field.

The VAD is an implanted device that takes over the pumping function of one or both ventricles in end-stage heart failure patients. The VAD allows patients to be discharged from the hospital with a fully portable, wearable system. In the event the VAD's systems fail, the VAD is equipped with an external hand pump which will maintain some forward blood flow.

To date, to our knowledge, there are approximately 12-14 patients in Massachusetts with this device, and five hospitals – Boston Medical Center, Brigham and Women's Hospital, New England Medical Center, Massachusetts General Hospital and UMass Medical Center – that accept and treat VAD patients. We anticipate that in the future, there will be more of these patients sent out of hospitals to live in the community.

The American Heart Association, on whose standard cardiopulmonary resuscitation in Massachusetts is based, has not yet put forth standards for prehospital patient care and provider training for VAD patients. We understand that patients with VADs should not have chest compressions done, and that in lieu of chest compressions, if they are otherwise clinically indicated, the VAD should be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

The Department is encouraging hospitals to notify local EMS agencies when VAD patients are discharged to home. We also plan to put on the OEMS website, at <http://www.mass.gov/dph/oems>, excerpts from the manufacturer's instructions for the only VAD device currently approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and in use for patients being sent home, if services wish to consult them for training personnel.

If you have any further questions about EMS response to VAD patients, please consult your affiliate hospital medical director, or other medical control entity.